

# Integrating apps into client work

Many of us enjoy using apps on our mobile phones. They can make life easier; with apps to help you lose weight, budget, tracking exercise, monitor sleep and manage your time. But you can also integrate apps into your work with clients.

Most clients have a smart phone. Basic smart phones are low cost and an essential form of communication, particularly as landlines become less common. There are numerous ways that apps can be used with clients. Start a conversation in your workplace about how they can benefit your clients.

## Before you start there are a few issues to consider

- Confidentiality/Privacy – clients will need to know what information the app is using on their phone and agree to terms. They will also need to take care when entering sensitive information, such as information about their mental health, into their app. Make sure that their phone is secured by a password.
- Record keeping – comply with the record keeping requirements of your organisation. (eg if you are designing a case plan with a client you will need a hard copy).
- Loss of information if the clients losses their phone or it is stolen. It is important that as a worker you still keep all the documentation required in the traditional ways.
- Data used by the app. Downloading an app will affect the client's data usage. Also, some apps may continue to use data when the app is not being used.
- Review the policies and procedures of your organisation and make any changes needed.

## Goal Setting apps

Goal setting is now an integral part of case management. It is important for clients to set individual goals that are important to them. Client goals can be large or small and are ideal for goal setting apps. The paper based case management plan can be used as a basis, then the client can upload their main goals into the app. The benefits of using a goal setting app in addition to a hard copy plan are

- Goals and strategies can be listed with time frames, reminders and motivational prompts
- The Goals are always with the client, which assists to increase ownership of the case plan
- Apps often provide information and statistics that can increase motivation to achieve goals

## Budgeting apps

Increasing financial literacy is important when clients are living on low incomes or Centrelink payments. There are many budgeting apps available that can assist clients to work out their regular income and expenses, track their spending and set savings goals.

## Apps to reduce anxiety and depression

This is a booming area in the app development field. E-treatment (apps for increased mental health) should be seen as complementary to traditional mental health treatment, not a replacement. The Black Dog Institute reviewed available research to judge whether mental health apps on mobile devices were effective, and whether they suited all ages. Results showed significant reductions in depression, stress, and substance use which continued over time. One controlled study worth noting was conducted by East Carolina University where they found using apps based games reduced depression by 57% in their participants. However, the Black Dog Institute noted the small number of studies on e-health apps and large number of apps available that are not evidence based.

There are thousands of apps claiming to reduce anxiety and depression in the iPhone App or Google Play store. Because of this it is best to focus on apps that are produced by an Australian University or recommended by a well-known organisation or professional body.

Queensland University of Technology has developed the Mobile App Rating Scale (MARS). It is a tool designed for rating the quality of mobile health apps. For details on the research you can [view this article](#).

Victoria Health reviewed healthy living apps using MARS and provided access to a [list of these on their website](#).

[Reachout](#) is an Australian information hub targeted at young people. They have a selection of apps that are reviewed by a professional and a young people.

The [Australian Government](#) has provided a selection of apps created by various government organisations.

## Apps to assist people living with different abilities

There are many apps developed to assist people with different abilities.

- LifeTec, an Australian organisation, provide information and advice related to apps for people with disabilities. They have a variety of free [factsheets](#) including apps for carers, wheelchair users, safety monitoring, health management, medication management, prompting and scheduling, and apps for sensory enhancement (vision and hearing).
- Choice looks at apps that can provide assistance with hearing, vision, speech and dexterity.
- The [Autism Association of Western Australian](#) website provides information to equip people to successfully choose apps that are most appropriate for a person with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- [House with No Steps](#) lists 10 apps that improve accessibility for people with a disability.
- AppleVis is a community-powered [website](#) for blind and low-vision users of Apple's range of technology
- The [American Foundation for the Blind](#) has a list of accessible Android applications.

## Apps are available in the iPhone App store or the Google Play store.



**Illawarra Forum Inc** ABN 95 589 148 519  
106B Industrial Rd, Oak Flats NSW 2529  
P: (02) 4256 4333 [illawarraforum.org.au](http://illawarraforum.org.au)